



# African American Women Claiming their Power in Fight Against HIV

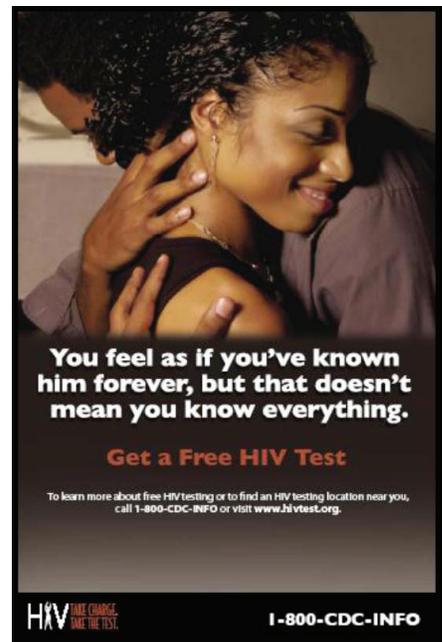
As part of its comprehensive efforts to address the HIV prevention needs of African American women, CDC launched Take Charge. Take the Test:™ ([hivtest.cdc.gov/takecharge](http://hivtest.cdc.gov/takecharge)). This public education campaign encourages HIV testing and awareness among African American women, who are more severely affected by HIV than women of any other race or ethnicity. The campaign launched in 10 major U.S. cities where large numbers of black women are affected by HIV:

- Atlanta
- Chicago
- Detroit
- Fort Lauderdale, FL
- Houston
- Memphis, TN
- Newark, NJ
- New Orleans
- Hyattsville, MD
- St. Louis

*Take Charge. Take the Test.* messages remind women that they have the power to take charge of their health and protect themselves from HIV through testing, talking openly with their partners about HIV, and insisting on safe sex. In each city, campaign messages are disseminated through radio, billboard, and transit advertising as well as community outreach efforts. Local health departments are leading implementation of the campaign in each of the participating cities, working closely with community organizations and venues that serve African American women.

The campaign's messages and images reflect the input of many partners working to prevent HIV among African American women. These messages were informed by research with African American women throughout the United States and developed in consultation with groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Black AIDS Institute, National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, National Minority AIDS Council, American Academy of HIV Medicine, National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, National Association of County and City Health Officials, and National Association of People With AIDS.

During a pilot program in Cleveland and Philadelphia, *Take Charge. Take the Test.* community events reached nearly 10,000 people, and campaign messages were seen more than 100 million times.



## HIV: A Health Crisis for African American Women



Today, black women bear a far greater burden of HIV than women of any other race or ethnicity in the United States, accounting for 64 percent of all new infections among women and 13 percent of new infections overall. Recent CDC data found indications of an encouraging decline in new infections among black women; still, black women are infected at a rate 20 times as high as white woman and nearly five times as high as Hispanic women.

Research shows that African American women do not engage in riskier behaviors than other women, but a complex range of epidemiologic, social, and environmental factors place them at greater risk for HIV. These factors include a higher prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections in many black communities, which results in African American women facing a greater likelihood of infection with each sexual encounter. Research also shows that financial dependence on male partners may limit some women's ability to negotiate safe sex. Limited access to health care also plays a role and can prevent women and men from getting HIV testing or treatment. HIV stigma, which is far too prevalent in all communities, may also discourage African American women from seeking HIV testing.

## HIV Testing Is the First Step toward Protecting Your Health and Those You Love

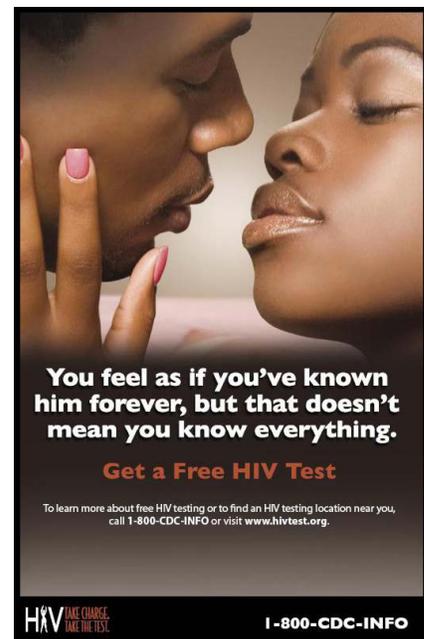
CDC recommends that all adults and adolescents in the United States be tested for HIV, regardless of risk factors. By learning their HIV status, African American women can take charge of their health and protect themselves and their partners.

Women who test negative can take stock of—and modify—risky behaviors to stay HIV-negative. Those who learn that they have HIV can take steps to protect others from infection. They can also seek HIV treatment, which not only improves their health but also dramatically reduces the risk of transmitting HIV to others.

### **Take Charge. Take the Test. Components**

The campaign is designed to reach African American women with empowering HIV prevention messages through multiple channels. Campaign components include:

- **Local advertising**—Extensive local advertising, including billboard, transit, and radio ads designed to reach African American women in their everyday lives.
- **Community outreach by HIV-positive women**—In some participating cities, local campaign spokeswomen living with HIV share their stories with other African American women at community events.
- **Campaign toolkit**—Local health departments will employ a *Take Charge. Take the Test.* toolkit with information and materials to use in educational events and other outreach activities.
- **Promotional materials**—*Take Charge. Take the Test.* posters, postcards, and palm cards are distributed in salons, stores, and community organizations. Campaign materials also appear on the websites of participating health departments and their local partners.
- **Campaign website**—The *Take Charge. Take the Test.* web site ([hivtest.cdc.gov/takecharge](http://hivtest.cdc.gov/takecharge)) includes a search tool to help women find HIV testing locations in their communities. The site also provides information about HIV and AIDS, an overview of the campaign and local events, and campaign graphics and resources.



*Take Charge. Take the Test.* is part of *Act Against AIDS* ([www.cdc.gov/ActAgainstAIDS.org](http://www.cdc.gov/ActAgainstAIDS.org)), CDC's 5-year, \$45 million national communication campaign to combat complacency about the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States. Other *Act Against AIDS* campaigns include those targeting high-risk populations such as gay and bisexual men, as well as efforts to reach health care providers and the general public.